

THE LORD'S PRAYER EXPLAINED LINE BY LINE



In this article, we will briefly review line by line (verse by verse) various

interpretations of the Lord's Prayer, as explained by different authors throughout history. Currently, we are only including the interpretations of John Wesley, Richard Kingsley, Andrew Murray, Helmut Thielicke, and The [Living Hour](#). However, we may add interpretations from other Christian thinkers as time goes by.

Please note that this is just a very quick summary of the line by line interpretations from these authors, placed side by side, so that you can see a few differences. You can find much fuller expositions of these verse by verse meditations on the Lord's Prayer by browsing the posts at the following link: [The Lord's Prayer Explained Line by Line](#).

THE LORD'S PRAYER EXPLAINED VERSE BY VERSE

Lord's Prayer Line 1: Our Father Who Art in Heaven

Living Hour: Why does Jesus call out to our "Father" in heaven at

the beginning of The Lord's Prayer? It's his reminder to us that God's love is a call to action: a call to live up to our divine potential, to experience life more abundantly, to make his *kingdom come*.

Helmut Thielicke: Jesus shows us that the Father knows our deepest needs and secrets. And that means that he looks upon us men as a mother looks upon her child who is sick or in pain. The little child cannot tell what is wrong with him, and simply looks upon his mother with great, appealing eyes.

Charles Kingsley: He is educating us to know Him; to know Him not merely to be an Almighty Power, but a living, loving Person; not merely an irresistible Fate, but a Father who delights in the love of His children, who wishes to shape them into His own likeness, and make them fellow-workers with Him.

Andrew Murray: The knowledge of God's Father-love is the first and simplest, but also the last and highest lesson in the school of prayer. It is in the personal relation to the living God, and the personal conscious fellowship of love with Himself, that prayer begins.

John Wesley: "Our Father:" — Not *mine* only who now cry unto him, but *ours* in the most extensive sense. The God and "Father of the spirits of all flesh;" the Father of angels and men. The Father of the universe, of all the families both in heaven and earth. Therefore with him there is no respect of persons.

Lord's Prayer Line 2: Hallowed Be Thy Name

Living Hour: Jesus will allow for the idea that God has a name, but he isn't about to tell us what it is. Why the secrecy? Because Jesus understood that once God is given a name such as Yahweh or Elohim, it doesn't take long before we start asking for special

favours. Jesus, as we know, wanted to break the belief in a God that plays favorites.

Helmut Thielicke: Jesus turns our attention away from ourselves, even from our pious selves, and concentrates it upon the Father. The prayer is not "May I be hallowed" but "thy name be hallowed."

Charles Kingsley: When you say, 'Our Father, hallowed be Thy name,' you pray that all men may come at last to look up to God as their Father, to love, serve, and obey God as His children

Andrew Murray: The Spirit of the Father is the Holy Spirit: it is only when we yield ourselves to be led of Him, that the name will be hallowed in our prayer and our lives. Let us learn the prayer: 'Our Father, hallowed be Thy name.'

John Wesley: The name of God is God himself; the nature of God, so far as it can be discovered to man. It means, therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections; His eternity, particularly signified by his great and incommunicable name, JeHoVAH.

Lord's Prayer Line 3: Thy Kingdom Come

Living Hour: It is by nurturing the living God in ourselves and others that we make the Father's kingdom come. But what exactly is this kingdom if it is not what we normally take for heaven? The Gospels provide us with plenty of clues. But also many false leads. We need to be careful when applying our winnowing fans.

Helmut Thielicke: The kingdom of God appears precisely at the place where there is blindness, lameness, leprosy, and death. It does not shun any of these things because it is too good for the slums and haunts of misery, because only the distant realm of a golden city, a city above the clouds is worthy of the dignity of God.

Charles Kingsley: When we pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' it is as if we said, 'Son of God, root out of this sinful earth all self-will and lawlessness, all injustice and cruelty; root out all carelessness, ignorance, and hardness of heart; root out all hatred, envy, slander; root them out of all men's hearts; out of my heart, for I have the seeds of them in me.

Andrew Murray: The Father is a King and has a kingdom. The son and heir of a king has no higher ambition than the glory of his father's kingdom. In time of war or danger this becomes his passion; he can think of nothing else.

John Wesley: We pray for the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things.

Lord's Prayer Line 4: Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven

Living Hour: To realize our potential as God's children, we need to look at our "will" in the same light as we've described God's: as a matter of choice. All too often we look at human will as some ephemeral power which we all have in varying degrees. When we fail to do things like exercise more, eat better, or learn the piano, we blame it on a lack of such power—as if it is something beyond our control.

Helmut Thielicke: We live in a world in which men kill and die, in a world in which we can fall into the terrible hands of men, a world in which only dim traces remain of the glory and the grandeur that

God intended for his creation—not until we remember all this can we begin to measure the fervency of that petition, “Thy kingdom come,” the fervency of hope and homesickness with which we await the coming of a new heaven and a new earth where God will be all in all. And so it is also with the petition, “Thy will be done.”

Charles Kingsley: Not merely ‘Thy will be done;’ but done ‘on earth as it is in heaven;’ done, not merely as the trees and the animals, the wind and clouds, do Thy will, by blindly following their natures, but done as angels and blessed spirits do it, of their own will.

Andrew Murray: As the will is done, the kingdom of heaven comes into the heart. And wherever faith has accepted the Father’s love, obedience accepts the Father’s will. The surrender to, and the prayer for a life of heaven-like obedience, is the spirit of childlike prayer.

John Wesley: We pray, not so much for a passive, as for an active, conformity to the will of God, in saying, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” How is it done by the angels of God in heaven, — those who now circle his throne rejoicing? They do it *willingly*; they love his commandments, and gladly hearken to his words.

Lord's Prayer Line 5: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

Living Hour: When Jesus tells us in the Lord’s Prayer to pray: *Give us this day our daily bread...* this does not mean that we are asking God to deliver us our portion of the Holy Spirit, for the spirit cannot be divided up like pie. What we are doing is gathering from the Father our shared inheritance of joys and sorrows, challenges and triumphs, blessings and losses, and making them our own.

Helmut Thielicke: Great things, small things, spiritual things and

material things, inward things and outward things—there is nothing that is not included in this prayer. It can be said by a child, praying for bread and butter, and it can also be uttered in that agonizing zone between “annihilation and survival” in which men fervently yearn for the coming of the kingdom which will resolve the hopelessly tangled skein of this world’s conditions.

Richard Kingsley: When we say, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ we do indeed honour God and the name of God. We declare that He is Love, that He is The Giver, The absolutely and boundlessly *generous and magnanimous* Being. And what higher glory and honour or praise can we ascribe, even to God Himself, than to say that of Him?

Andrew Murray: When first the child has yielded himself to the Father in the care for His Name, His Kingdom, and His Will, he has full liberty to ask for his daily bread. A master cares for the food of his servant, a general of his soldiers, a father of his child. And will not the Father in heaven care for the child who has in prayer given himself up to His interests?

John Wesley: By “bread” we may understand all things needful, whether for our souls or bodies; *ta pros zoen kai eusebeian*, “the things pertaining to life and godliness”: We understand not barely the outward bread, what our Lord terms the meat which perisheth; but much more the spiritual bread, the grace of God, the food which endureth unto everlasting life.

Lord's Prayer Line 6: And Forgive Us Our Trespasses

Living Hour: By seeking forgiveness for “our trespasses” we also acknowledge an important truth about our “daily bread.” That is, the ownership we have claimed over it is a joint one shared with every man, woman, and child. This partnership is so entwining that,

try as we might, we will always trespass on the feelings and interests of others—and often in ways we are not even conscious of at the time.

Helmut Thielicke: When we pray this petition, “Forgive us our debts (trespasses),” we do not pray it only for ourselves personally and individually. In these words we bring to the Father the whole mountainous burden of sin that weighs upon the whole world and like a nightmare haunts this present historical hour.

Charles Kingsley: We cannot blame ourselves too much for all these sins; we cannot think them too heinous. We cannot confess them too openly; we cannot cry too humbly and earnestly for forgiveness. But we never shall feel the full sinfulness of sin; we never shall thoroughly humble ourselves in confession and repentance, unless we remember that all our sins have been sins against a Father, and a forgiving Father.

Andrew Murray: As bread is the first need of the body, so forgiveness for the soul. And the provision for the one is as sure as for the other. We are children, but sinners too; our right of access to the Father’s presence we owe to the precious blood and the forgiveness it has won for us. Let us beware of the prayer for forgiveness becoming a formality: only what is really confessed is really forgiven.

John Wesley: The word translated *forgive* implies either to forgive a debt, or to unloose a chain. And if we attain the former, the latter follows of course: if our debts are forgiven, the chains fall off our hands. As soon as ever, through the free grace of God in Christ, we “receive forgiveness of sins,” we receive likewise “a lot among those which are sanctified, by faith which is in him.”

Lord's Prayer Line 7: As We Forgive Those Who Trespass

Against Us

Living Hour: It might seem impossible to forgive someone who has wronged us “seventy times seven times”. Because it feels like we are letting the offender off the hook. But actually we are leaving ourselves off the hook; releasing ourselves from the anger, frustration, disappointment, and superiority that often accompany our judgments.

Helmut Thielicke: Jesus teaches us to say: “Forgive us our debts (trespasses).” And the fact is that he does not intend this to be merely a private, devotional prayer. No, when I pray these words I am bringing into the light of God’s countenance the guilt of all the world, war and rumors of war, every conscious and every unacknowledged wickedness.

Charles Kingsley: We must confess what God’s law is before we can confess that we have broken it; and now we do confess that we have broken it. We know that God is our Father. How often have we forgotten that He is a father; how often have we forgotten to be good fathers ourselves.

Andrew Murray: Such forgiveness, as a living experience, is impossible without a forgiving spirit to others: as *forgiven* expresses the heavenward, so *forgiving* the earthward, relation of God’s child. In each prayer to the Father I must be able to say that I know of no one whom I do not heartily love.

John Wesley: In these words our Lord clearly declares both on what condition, and in what degree or manner, we may look to be forgiven of God. All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us, *if* we forgive, and *as* we forgive, others. [First, God forgives us *if* we forgive others.] This is a point of the utmost importance.

Lord's Prayer Line 8: And Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Living Hour: Having led us through forgiveness, the Lord's Prayer turns to temptation. Jesus approaches the subject from a curious angle. He asks us to pray that the Father will not *lead us* into temptation. "This inevitably causes us to ask: Why would an all-good God lead us to the devil's doorstep? If we believe in the Lord, does he not reward that faith by leading us *away* from temptation?"

Helmut Thielicke: The inner attitude of the man who has thrown overboard every higher law and authority and taken the helm in his own hands, nay more, the inner attitude of the man who has even pushed aside the hand of God, in which he might be safe, and gone off on his own. For he doesn't want to be "safe"; he wants to live "dangerously."

Charles Kingsley: You are not only entreating God to lead you, but you are honouring and praising Him, you are setting forth His glory, and declaring that He is a God who does *lead*, and a God who does not leave His poor creatures to wander their own foolish way, but guides men, in spite of all their sins, full of condescension and pity, care and tender love.

Andrew Murray: Our daily bread, the pardon of our sins, and then our being kept from all sin and the power of the evil one, in these three petitions all our personal need is comprehended.

John Wesley: The word translated *temptation* means trial of any kind. And so the English word temptation was formerly taken in an indifferent sense, although now it is usually understood of solicitation to sin.

Lord's Prayer Line 9: But Deliver Us From Evil

Living Hour: Jesus chooses the cross and crucifixion as his

symbols for the journey out of the pit because the process is so difficult, so rife with psychological suffering. Letting go of our egos (and all its expectations and desires) can be as painful as when a parent is forced to accept the death of a child. And many of us refuse to accept Christ's call.

Helmut Thielicke: Literally translated, this petition reads: "Deliver us from *the evil*." And here again what is meant is not evil in general, and therefore what is bad, imperfect, vicious, perhaps even demonic, but rather the "evil one." It is therefore a *personal* magnitude. It is nothing less than—the devil.

Charles Kingsley: You do not only ask God to deliver you from evil, but you declare that He is righteous, and hates evil; that He is love, and desires to deliver you from evil; One who spared not His only-begotten Son, but gave Him freely for us, to deliver us from evil; and raised Him up, and delivered all power into His hand

Andrew Murray: The prayer for bread and pardon must be accompanied by the surrender to live in all things in holy obedience to the Father's will, and the believing prayer in everything to be kept by the power of the indwelling Spirit from the power of the evil one.

John Wesley: "But deliver us from evil." Rather "from the evil one,"; *apo tou ponerou. ho Poneros* is unquestionably *the wicked one*, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience.

Lord's Prayer Line 10: For Thine is The Kingdom, The Power & The Glory. Forever. Amen

Living Hour: If we are to acquire that life giving faith, and get glimpses of the Father's divine plan, we must take a "big picture"


view of our lives and the history of the world. This means letting go

view of our lives and the history of the world. This means letting go of human time and entering God time. With human time we focus on beginnings and ends, and see time as a product that can be saved, lost, and spent.

Helmut Thielicke: The mystery of the kingdom of God can never be recognized from the outside, by a disinterested spectator, but only from within, by entering into it, in other words, by looking into the eyes of Jesus Christ. That is to say, in the kingdom of God everything is a matter of perspective.

Andrew Murray: Children of God! it is thus Jesus would have us to pray to the Father in heaven. O let His Name, and Kingdom, and Will, have the first place in our love; His providing, and pardoning, and keeping love will be our sure portion.

John Wesley: The conclusion of this divine prayer, commonly called the Doxology, is a solemn thanksgiving, a compendious acknowledgement of the attributes and works of God.



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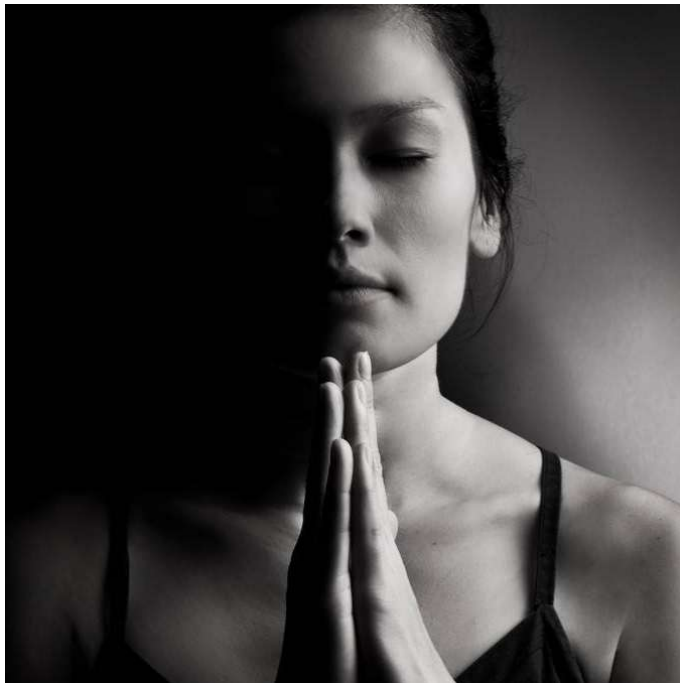
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